



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES



NUMBER:
FOR RELEASE: IMMEDIATE
www.dhs.ca.gov
www.kidsfitnesschallenge.com

DATE: April 8, 2006
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10,000 KIDS RUN FOR HEALTH AT THE KIDS FITNESS CHALLENGE ***Celebrities and Community Members Take a Stand Against*** ***Childhood Obesity at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena***

PASADENA, CA – Nearly 10,000 kids, parents, teachers and community leaders participated in the Kids Fitness Challenge today, a landmark California Public Health Week event. The milestone kids-focused, non-competitive 5K run/walk kicks off events in other cities across the nation to empower children and parents to take charge of their health by eating healthy and being physically active. KNBC provided live coverage as part of its “Today in LA” show with Colleen Williams serving as the event emcee.

NFL Hall of Famer Jerry Rice and Chairman of the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports Jake “Body by Jake” Steinfeld jump started the run/walk leading participants in a group warm up. Participants, led by Ryan Benson, winner of *The Biggest Loser* reality show, and Olympic gold medalist Quincy Watts, poured through the Rose Bowl tunnel and crossed the finish line onto the field.

“The expressions of excitement, determination and accomplishment on the kids’ faces today really showed what they are capable of when given the right tools and motivation,” said Rice. “Helping kids to develop healthy habits and encouraging them to participate in fun activities they enjoy will enable them to achieve their dreams and become the future leaders of tomorrow.”

Attendees also learned about the various aspects of a healthy lifestyle with the Family Lifestyle Experience which featured the Bally Fitness Zone with an obstacle course, hip-hop class and climbing wall as well as free health screenings, food demonstrations and interactive health booths.

“This event provides a visible example of how the strength and dedication of a community can affect positive change,” said State Public Health Officer Dr. Mark Horton. “With more of our children falling victim to the effects of obesity every day, it’s more critical than ever to initiate and support a change in the way Californians eat, play, live and feel.”

Southern California schools that took part in the challenge received an added bonus. By participating, they had a chance to win equipment and grants to fund year-round physical activity programs. Each participant was given a free 6-week membership to Bally Total Fitness as part of Bally's BFIT Community Program and the opportunity to earn points for their schools every time they use their membership. After May 14, the secondary school with the highest combined participation rate at the Kids Fitness Challenge and Bally Total Fitness will receive a fitness center and the elementary school with the highest participation will receive playground equipment. Every school with at least 65 participants will receive a grant from the Fitness Challenge Foundation.

"It's inspiring to see so many community members step up to the Kids Fitness Challenge because healthy kids are better students and better students make stronger communities," said John Wordin, director of the Fitness Challenge Foundation. "I hope today's event will spark a life-long commitment to physical activity and healthy eating for all those who were involved so that we can continue this momentum and reverse the rate of obesity across the state."

California's epidemic of obesity, which is being caused by poor nutrition and physical inactivity has serious implications – especially for the health of our children. Thirty-eight percent of California children ages nine to 11 are overweight or at a risk of becoming overweight. Close to 74 percent of youth are unfit and only 40 percent of teens meet minimum daily targets for physical activity. Improving dietary practices and physical activity are major strategies for preventing many of the chronic diseases which account for more than 75 percent of medical costs in the United States.

Governor Schwarzenegger has led the fight against California's obesity epidemic. Since becoming Governor, he has initiated both state and national efforts to raise awareness about the obesity epidemic, including:

- Signing landmark legislation giving California public schools the strongest nutritional standards in the nation by getting sodas and junk food out of schools.
- Signing legislation to ensure more fresh fruits and vegetable are offered through free and reduced meal programs at schools.
- Convening a summit of leaders and experts from the business, education, government and public health communities to fundamentally change core business practices to encourage Californians to make healthier choices.
- Unveiling an ambitious, forward-reaching 10-point vision of a healthy California that challenges government, business, community organizations and individuals to make California a national model for healthy living.

- Proposing \$85 million in his 2006-07 budget to provide resources to support PE instruction, improve student health and expand curricular opportunities for students.

In addition, California has implemented a number of initiatives that provide nutrition education and resources for children and their parents, especially those in low-income households. The California Department of Health Services' *California Nutrition Network for Healthy, Active Families* works with more than 300 different public, non-profit and business partners throughout the state to empower low-income Californians to consume the recommended amount of fruits and vegetables and enjoy physical activity every day with campaigns such as *California 5 a Day*. For more information, visit the *Network* Web site at www.ca5aday.com.

The Kids Fitness Challenge Foundation program is a comprehensive national program to reverse the rising rates of childhood obesity through physical activity, nutrition, and positive mental health initiatives, including the development and implementation of policies and programs that promote regular physical activity and nutrition education in schools. The Kids Fitness Challenge Foundation is committed to creating "small changes that can make a big difference." For more information, visit www.kidsfitnesschallenge.com.